

Interview with Chinmaya

The Buddha Disease

Darshan Diary

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Chinmaya was one of the first disciples of Osho and has been living in the ashram with the two dozen or so other Indian sannyasins for some years now. Over the past year particularly, he has come to be regarded-not unkindly -as the ashram's pundit, or Mulla Nasruddin alternately.

The questions he puts to Osho in the morning discourse are invariably lengthy and very intellectual, setting Chinmaya up for the inevitable zen Whack from Osho and friendly chafing from fellow-sannyasins!

Well loved, particularly by Indian sannyasins-Chinmaya has something of a following himself, and has established a reputation for being able to produce deeply significant and highly esoteric reasons for the most innocent of happenings around Osho!

It was interesting to talk with him about his first meeting with Osho because at that time Osho was professor at the University of Jabalpur.

Coming from a family who followed the orthodox Hindu tradition, Chinmaya remained discontent with that way of life and started searching intently by himself

Chinmaya: In 1965 I came across a very small article written by Osho, written by himself-he used to write articles for magazines and newspapers, Sunday articles. I came across this article-' Love, non-violence, meditation and samadhi'-and it struck me very deeply because I was well-acquainted with previous literature about yoga and Bhakti and had been in contact with yogis and wandering monk's

I immediately caught the quality and joyousness of Osho and felt that I had to meet this man. I read his first book of

meditation' the path of self-realisation' originally in Hindi, so I had grasped this basic attitude towards religious experience, about an approach to life that was against all techniques, all gurus, scriptures, traditions, patterns, disciplines, and I was a very staunch student of yoga so I became more curious. This man seemed to be very much a stirrer up of debate and yet very charismatic.

Chinmaya procured Osho's address and made his way to where he lived

Chinmaya: Finally I was in front of this bungalow and read the nameplate' Acharya (teacher) Rajneesh', and I relaxed.

Slowly I opened the gate and entered into the beautiful rose garden which he himself used to maintain and has mentioned many times. I entered the main building and just gave a sharp knock on the door and heard the sound,' Please come in. 'I pushed the door open and just in front of me Osho was sitting.

I was attracted immediately because he was so healthy and shiny and beautifuland so young! He was writing on a pad- perhaps some article for a magazine. Immediately he put his pen aside and welcomed me.

He asked what my occupation was and what I practiced in religion and he listened very carefully to my description of what I was practicing. I told him that I had read a few of his articles and books and that I had many questions that I would like to ask him because I was a yogi student and he was so much against techniques. He was against even concentration, all physiological techniques, breath techniques, meditation techniques, visualisation techniques, feeling and sound techniques.

He slowly explained how the techniques are harmful, how they spoil the subtle brain nerves, how they are violent, how they manipulate the human brain and how risky that is.

So he talked for about one and a half hours and then he said,' Enough for today?' I said,' No! I still have half my questions unanswered!' He said to come again next morning.

Maneesha: Can you describe a little more about him as a person?

Chinmaya: He used to always sit on a mattress bed and visitors would sit with him on the same mattress. He used to always have a bare chest and wear a white lungi.

I found him tremendously magnetic and just radiating energy, bubbling over with energy. It was as if you were near a cyclone of energy. He was so robust and healthy and strong that you completely forgot who you were, where you werethe past just disappeared because he took your attention completely at every level. He was so refreshing, so rejuvenating to be near, that all problems, all the past, was completely forgotten. For the first time you felt that you could solve everything in life and I felt for the first time that here was a man who could reply to all my thousands of questions.

I used to meditate about life, about problems, existence, different kinds of life, about the causes of misery, and over ten years I used to write diaries about my contemplations. My diaries were full of queries—one query leading to another and one question leading to deeper and deeper and deeper questions. I used to raise my hands in a lonely place far away from the city and used to pray, 'Who is there on earth who can reply to my questions?'

In questioning I used to go deeper and deeper and came to a point of futility and helplessness. Then I used to be left in silence and nowhere.

Later on I became aware that I was following a very specific meditation procedure—that was 'koan', a Zen method. After the questioning and relaxing into silence I used to go into meditation and I had many experiences which I could not decode at that time—I used to fill my head becoming bigger and bigger and bigger.

Maneesha: Osho felt to you to be absolutely unique that time?

Chinmaya: Yes. Later on I became aware that he was working on the minds of people for the first ten, twelve years of public

contact after enlightenment and post graduation. He had in his mind how he would go step-by-step dealing with the consciousness of Indian citizens who were in contact with him.

At that time he was using negation and debate, challenging people in their ideas and beliefs, challenging the intelligentsia of the nation-and hitting hard. He used to disturb them terribly-just as if he wanted to wash out the rubbish from their minds so that he could put in his new vision and ideas.

Maneesha: What was so disturbing about him if, in effect what he was saying at this stage was not unlike what Krishnamurti was saying?

Chinmaya: His life was entirely different from Krishnamurti's. For many years—at least twenty years—Osho used to live in guru fashion—long-hair, lungi's and a big cover sheet over his chest and wooden sandals. He looked like a spiritual man. By all means—the outer appearance and the inner personality—he was the perfect spiritual man, whereas Krishnamurti looked very much like a layman.

Osho used to talk more about God; he used the word 'God' and 'Mukti' and he used to emphasise meditations more than Krishnamurti did. He used to say that the relaxation of body and mind is a very gradual process which leads to the inner silence and emptiness.

He used to have deeper public contact—like going to religious festivals, religious discourses, where many spiritual heads would be; he was entering the traditional fields of religion in India. He would meet different spiritual leaders on stage as one of them; but always against them—firing!

He was more into the practical problems of religion rather than remaining aloof and just talking. He used to take initiative on the practical dimension—holding meditation camps, going for spiritual tours. And he was talking not only to the very sophisticated but moving into lower public life too.

Krishnamurti was always very reserved and limited in his contact whereas Osho—Acharya Rajneesh he used to be called at that

time-would even go to inaugurate a shop, a juice drink shop! He would go to picnics with his students when he was a professor and would attend many seminars of his students and professors and philosophers. He used to go for drives to the forest, to picnics and boating and would always take groups with him.

He always attracted young people to him and they started slowly becoming crazily in love with him.

Chinmaya continued to explore everything of a spiritual nature for he felt that Osho had no practical approach at that time that one could use in everyday life. He visited gurus and pundits in the Himalayas and stayed for sometime at Muktananda's ashram but decided he was becoming too confined to a specific system.

In 1968 he was asked by a group of Osho's followers to conduct yoga classes in Bombay-a move supported by Osho.

Osho had resigned from his post as Professor in August 1966 and begun to travel extensively around India. By 1970 Osho had moved his headquarters to Bombay.

Chinmaya: Before coming to Bombay to make his headquarters he had been talking to a group of 60,000 about being beware of socialism, and in the mornings was taking meditation classes.

One morning he came and we were expecting the old techniques- 'relax your body, relax your breathing, relax your thoughts' and this and that, but he said, 'Today I am going to introduce to you a completely new method of meditation!' We became alert and then he described his first chaotic meditation. Suddenly there were explosions-cries and noise and sounds panting and fallen down and dancing and banging into each other! People were even tearing at their clothes-people were crazy in the second stage.

We were shocked completely by this sudden experience with a new technique, but he encouraged us to continue it.

At the end of April, 1971 just before visiting Ahmedabad, Osho called me and said that a new phase of his spiritual work would start—the work between master and disciples. He said that we should find a new name for him and especially asked me to bring a list of possible names. He liked the name 'Bhagwan' and immediately ordered me to change his names in recent publications and called me one evening to announce the change of name in public and to explain why he had changed from Acharya Rajneesh to Bhagwan Rajneesh.

It caused much controversy all over India because the word 'Bhagwan' is highly respected; no man would dare to call himself God. Many articles appeared against the change and Osho received hundreds and hundreds of letters against it. After about one month he suddenly wrote a press note of about fifteen lines, saying;

' I am nobody-only he is. Whatsoever the existence, the infinite reality, states, I just respond to it. So I'm not a person, not a Messiah, not a Teerthankar—but I am nothing less!'

The excitement continued for about eight months and then everybody settled.

Chinmaya said that the outcry was, in part, because Osho had become such an active, social figure and a threat to many ..

Chinmaya: About three quarters of the intelligentsia were focused on him. They were disturbed—and magnetised—by him. Everyone became alert that this man would do something explosive and every field was thinking that this man belonged to their field.

Politicians used to think that he would take over the government of India, educationists were thinking he would start hundreds of educational institutions all over India. Culturists, literary people, thought of him as the top authority, but they were not completely adjusted to him.

They used to regard him as a genius, as a scholar, a revolutionary, a unique thinker—unparalleled—but they were not ready to except him as a god or as a Buddha or someone

other-worldly. Those who were opposed to him on religion were Popes-Shankaracharyas—who had vested interest in religion, and he was trying to uproot them from the establishment.

Osho closed himself in his Bombay residence, only meeting seekers, devotees, disciples. He stopped all interviews to VIPs and press reporters and he was not, in anyway interested in scholars. Then he started having thousands of disciples. Those who were deeply into religious life and practical spirituality were feeling his divinity even in his lectures on life problems, on education and culture. He used to bring the flowering of God consciousness to everything.

Chinmaya became Osho's secretary for three years, organising lectures, meditation programs and camp's

I used to see him a lot at this time—I used to sit with him for approximately one to two hours a day and I used to have conversations and consultations with him. In the first early years I also used to travel with him for lectures and camps.

Before residing with him I was living in his ideas, his expressions, in the world of his words and, a little bit, the world of his meditations. But when I started living with him, my relationship became of being to being, the words and his wisdom became secondary and closeness became deeper and deeper. Slowly, slowly I started dropping scholarship and knowledge and mind and became concerned with inner silence and spiritual questions.

Maneesha: you must be the most often mentioned sannyasin in Osho's discourses now! Do you think Osho is saying certain things about you as a device for you?

Chinmaya: Osho wants to explode my ego forever. I constantly feel that he's on my head all the time just like a volcano trying to explode and wash out my ego forever. His compassion, which is also a divine fire, is burning me so that the impure gold is being passed through the furnace of spiritual fire so that in the final process only absolutely pure gold comes out.

The more he kills me, the more grateful I becometears of gratefulness overflow from my eyes.

